

601 III. TABLES OF RELATIVES WITH WHOM MARRIAGE IS PREFERRED

A. *Of Ego's Generation: Either Man or Woman*

Term	Relationship	Reciprocal term
<i>Epahume</i> or <i>cepua</i>	cross-cousins of all degrees (see list Table I. A. 4, p. 47)	<i>epahume</i> or <i>cepua</i>

B. *Of First Ascendant Generation: Man Speaking*

<i>Tatekhi</i>	father's 'sister' (see list Table I. D. 4, p. 48)	<i>ocimumba</i>
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C. *Of First Ascendant Generation: Woman Speaking*

<i>Mamu</i>	mother's 'brothers' (see list Table I. D. 3, p. 48)	<i>ocimumba</i>
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D. *Of First Descendant Generation: Man or Woman Speaking*

<i>Ocimumba</i>	mother's 'brother's' or father's 'sister's' grandchild	<i>mamu</i> or <i>tatekhi</i>
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591 Many writers have noted that, among other purposes, the
582 financial arrangements serve to give the bride a status in the
village of her husband. In a system of preferential kinship
marriage, this is a desideratum, although for other reasons than
those operating in a system where the wife comes as a comparative
stranger. In a system such as this of the Ovimbundu, it is evident
that many of the relatives by marriage are already blood relatives.
This is perhaps one reason why the avoidances with regard to 'in-
laws' are less rigidly held to than in a society such as the Zulu,
which holds strictly to exogamous marriage.¹

192 Another factor which makes for stability of marriage is the
601 bilineal kinship system (*epata*). This system offers to the wife an
initial security not usually found where descent is unilineal, or
even where there has been a one-sided development of one line of
descent at the expense of the other. The bilineal system is an
important factor in the preservation of social stability. Through
it the household and the village are links in the chain which even
yet binds the Ovimbundu into a social whole.

Sorcery

192 Umbundu society is subject to various forces which threaten its
794 cohesion and stability both from without and from within. Some
of the external forces have been touched upon.² Chief of the

¹ Krigs, op. cit., p. 39 f.² *Sagwa*, pp. v, 26.

KINSHIP

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internally disruptive forces is sorcery. It is apparently on the increase among the Ovimbundu, a tendency which has also been reported from other parts of Africa.¹ The extent to which sorcery operates within the kinship groups themselves makes its influence even more dangerous to social cohesion.

Any marked success achieved by an individual, especially when such success has been achieved by an individual alone or in partnership, but not in co-operation with a number of persons, often brings on suspicion of sorcery.² Should the results of such success be distributed widely and freely within the family or kinship group, suspicion of sorcery is less likely to arise and open accusation may be avoided. Grudges, however, whether newly built up or inherited, often find expression in suspicion or in open accusation of sorcery.³ An open accusation of sorcery (*oku sunga omwanga*) is a very serious matter and will not often be made lightly.

Such accusations are made both within and across kinship lines. Affinal relatives are quite often accused of sorcery, and suspicion frequently rests upon wives whose kinship connexions are in distant regions. Predilection for and skill in the use of sorcery is supposed to be inherited. A reputation for sorcery may be imputed to a family through a number of generations.

Somewhat less overt accusations of sorcery are made at the inquest during a funeral. The corpse in its coffin along to a pole between two carriers responds to questions as to who 'ate him' by forward (affirmative), or backward (negative) movements. It may also cause its carriers to stop in front of a certain house during the procession through the village, meaning that one of the occupants of the house is thereby accused of having caused the death. Traditionally such accusations during inquests were exceedingly common, perhaps even usually expected.⁴ Should the corpse not give a clear answer, then subsequent divination would often bring out an accusation of sorcery. Accusations such as these, involving responsibility for the death of a person, are usually made within the body of blood or affinal kin.

When sorcery is consciously taken up and employed, the purpose is usually economic advancement, but it often involves overt

¹ Cf. B. Malinowski, in *Africa*, 1939, p. 39.

² *Vide infra*, pp. 107 ff.

³ *Vide infra*, p. 125.

⁴ For an early observation of this (c. 1790) *vide Annals Mar. & Col.*, 5a Ser., p. 489 f.

there must be a responsible senior and, hence as a matter of course, 561
the following is accepted:

Ndalu hehulako la Vava:

Fire is not older than water:

Ciyu wa pindi-hapo.

Potsherd (or frying-pan) passes between (i.e. keeps the peace).

As potsherd (or frying-pan) keeps water from putting out fire and fire from consuming water, so the elder keeps the peace between the young of relatively equal status.

The hierarchy of age is taken as a matter of course and circum- 561
cision camps or other formal 'schools' are not considered necessary 881
to reinforce an attitude which no one would dream of disputing.
At the present time there is quite a vogue for circumcision camps
(*vakuecamba*) in the southern or south-eastern half of the country.
Some affirm that these are new-fangled notions coming in from
neighbouring tribes. Others declare the institution to be very old.
The Ngalangi people say that they have always had both *evamba*
for the boys and *uso wakāi* for the girls. Some tribes require *evamba* [643]
of the king before he may rule. Even where the institution is not
in vogue, there are associations of coevals (*vakuacisoko*) whose
members have definite rights and duties toward each other.
These matters are treated more fully in a later chapter. Inasmuch 561
as these age-grade sets are both age and sex divisions, they contain 182
some elements of social cleavage, but their association with the
economic and political sides of life makes them a strongly cohe-
sive force for society.

Umbundu Social Structure: Summary

Summarizing the evidence of the present chapter, I wish only to 182
tie in a few of the more important threads so that the pattern of the 621
Umbundu social structure may be seen at a glance.

Although the Ovimbundu no longer maintain the political life
which formerly existed; there are elements of cohesion which still
give reality to their social organism. These elements all centre in
or spring from the kinship group.

With regard to the village, two facts stand out:

1. The Umbundu village is a local kinship unit, with the
villagers quite literally the children of the headman-patriarch.
2. Although its political, religious, and social functions may be

182 in a somewhat decadent state, the Umbundu village has up
621 to the present maintained its status as a local kinship unit.

182 The household is not a solitary unit but a part of the village.
592 Since it is constituted by marriage, it embodies the union of at
602 least two kinship groups. The attitudes and behaviour patterns
within the Umbundu household are basically those universally
recognized. In common with the households of most Bantu
cultures, it differs from the European model in that it extends its
attitudes and behaviour patterns to the wider kinship groupings
by means of a classificatory system of relationship.

613 In the wider kinship groupings (*epata*), the Ovimbundu recognize
182 both the maternal (*oluina*) and the paternal (*oluse*) lines of descent.
The functions of the latter have been largely local, residential,
social, and religious, with succession (of status) in the male line.
The function of the former has been cohesive over a larger territory,
with a recognized head in whom has been vested both religious
and economic functions. Both his office and the inheritance of
property descend in the female line. Much of the power,
economic and personal, formerly held by the *oluina*, in the person
of the mother's brother, seems to be passing at the present time to
the *oluse*, in the person of the father. The bilineal kinship system
has been a strongly cohesive social force.

182 The form of marriage practised by the Ovimbundu is of the
[582] two-way cross-cousin type in both lines of kin and in three
generations. It seems to be an individual type developed in the
particular social and economic situation of the Ovimbundu. As
a contract between two families and as a new venture, the marriage
relation demands that great attention be given to attitudes and
behaviour patterns which emphasize mutual respect.

[561] The hierarchy of age is a very real factor in the Umbundu social
structure. Age-set 'schools' have not existed generally throughout
the tribes, but there are associations of coevals. This is largely a
cohesive force.

754 Sorcery is the most important disruptive force at work within
Umbundu society. Working as it does, within kinship groups, and
inasmuch as it seems to be on the increase, sorcery embodies a
real danger to social cohesion.

184 Homogeneity has never been an attribute of the Ovimbundu as
178 regards their racial or cultural make-up. The slave-trade injected
other and more diverse elements, and recent movements and

V. ECONOMIC LIFE

The words "economic life" are here used with a wide connotation 182 including nature lore, food supply, trade, transport, and industries; all these are combined to form a foundation for every aspect of the social life of the tribe.

The truth of this is realized if one pays attention to the rites 788 connected with occupations. For the hunter there is special training, 782 ritual, and a peculiar mode of burial. Final ceremonies in the initiation of a young blacksmith are associated with sacred acts such as sacrifice of animals and the sprinkling of the tools with their blood. Even the simple occupation of pounding corn requires that the rock shall be dedicated to this purpose by sprinkling the blood of a chicken on the surface. Similarly, a clay pit has to be consecrated before the raw material may be taken for making pottery. A caravan journey is not merely a commercial undertaking; the accompanying medicine-man carries a wooden figure which he consults with regard [787] to the route (Plate XXI, Fig. 5).

Division of labor according to sex is one of the most important 462 principles involved in the economic life, more particularly in occupational groupings, which are strictly observed. Moreover, within any one activity, such as house-building, there are tasks for men only, while other parts of the work are performed exclusively by women or children.

The study of industries is of great importance when a comparison 322 of Umbundu and adjacent cultures is being made. This is particularly true in the instance of wood-carving, an occupation yielding 177 highly specialized products some of which are connected with religious belief and ritual. All artifacts are valuable as criteria of cultural [778] contacts, though their reliability as evidence of trait diffusion naturally varies with their degree of complexity. Study of native industries in relation to European contacts illustrates a cultural process which may result in acceptance, rejection, or ingenious adaptation of new ideas.

That a study of the economic life of a tribe is not merely a record- 182 ing of material processes and artifacts, is illustrated by observation 231 of the treatment of cattle. This pastoral pursuit naturally falls under a heading "Domestic Animals," but the ideas associated with cattle, including funeral feasts, use of horns on graves, and the wrapping of the royal corpse in oxhide, lead directly into important matters of belief and ritual.

576 *konyimo oko* are spoken. The literal interpretation of these words is "back there." Ngonga says the words actually mean "excuse my back."

827 Spitting in the vicinity of the house of the king or of the chief is not allowed. "If you did that in the old days, you would have to pay something." Some people spit near the hearth in their own houses. A man who spits in the road is expected to cover the spittle. No person would spit in the presence of the chief or of the king. A hand should be placed in front of the mouth by a person who is coughing or sneezing.

576 [851] Shortly after the birth of a boy or girl all who are on good terms with the parents greet them by saying *kalunga*. The word is repeated four times with clapping of the palms. When words have been imperfectly heard and the listener desires repetition it is customary to say *kuku* in an interrogative tone.

[264] No particular etiquette is observed when eating. Two or three children eat from one platter, helping themselves with their fingers to the mush or sweet potatoes.

Rules forbidding the preparation of food by menstruating women, likewise prohibitions relating to stepping over a person, are mentioned in discussing taboos and omens.

EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF PLAY, MUSIC, AND DANCING

524 182 533 [113] The educational value of play lies in its imitation of the pursuits of adult life. Though there are specialists in music, dancing, and singing, these exercises are indulged in by everyone. Music, singing, and dancing are more than amusements, they are fundamental as coordinating forces in tribal life at all levels of culture (W. D. Hambly, *Tribal Dancing and Social Development*, London, 1926).

Among the Ovimbundu *Cimbamba Co Lia* is a popular game for girls, who form a circle, join hands, and sing:

PART I

524 [535] *Omola una, ndo sile vekango, Cimbamba co lia* ("That little child was left in the desert, the nighthawk ate it"). At the word *Cimbamba* they begin to dance, facing from side to side in such a manner that they meet and bow. Some sing, *Cimbamba co lia* ("The nighthawk ate him"), and others respond, *Kalikiisi* ("tis the goblins"), as many times as they wish. Finally a return is made to the first words which are sung again. All musical transcriptions have been made by Dr. G. Herzog from my phonographic records.

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Cattle-keepers of southern Angola make butter in calabash churns which are gently swung on a pole. The Ovimbundu have taken cattle from the south and west, but have not adopted dairy products. The cattle of the Ovimbundu are valued as a standard of wealth; have great purchasing power; are used to pay taxes and fines; and, in addition to these social and economic values, are the most important sacrificial animals. This is an instance of the arbitrary selection of some traits of a culture complex, while other factors, even those of economic importance, are ignored. 177

Cultural losses, and failures to utilize factors which were accessible are, according to the foregoing examples, due to change of habitat from northern Angola to the Benguela Highlands; European contacts; long-established agricultural habit; and conservatism, which to some extent is a characteristic of tribes at all cultural levels.

INTEGRATION OF TRAITS

A study which is concerned with growth of culture, demands more than a historical, geographical, and mechanistic interpretation. Morphological and historical research assists in tracing origins and in forming hypotheses respecting the order in which the traits were brought together. But such inquiries are static rather than dynamic, and they are a necessary prelude to anthropological work rather than an ultimate aim. 121

To the methods of research already followed there should be added a psychological approach with the object of showing the way in which various elements of culture are blended and are made to function.

The following pages illustrate the way in which a field investigation is brought into contact with the welding of cultural elements, and the examples chosen call attention to principles that are responsible for the process of integration. This assimilation of cultural elements renders the study of an isolated trait impossible, as the following instances indicate. These illustrations are chosen from field notes, and are grouped in such a way as to emphasize the pivotal elements of Umbundu culture around which minor traits revolve.

Some of the examples given are intended to illustrate a relationship between language (which includes folklore, proverbs, and riddles) and nature knowledge. The latter is closely connected with hunting, food-gathering, and the selection of materials for handwork. 105
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The inquiry then turns to occupations which indicate that sex dichotomy of labor is a fundamental principle of tribal life. In connection with the details of food supply and occupation, ritual acts are prominent, and in association with these the functions of the medicine-man are important.

Cultural liaisons are again illustrated when studying domestic animals, for this inquiry leads to a consideration of the social and economic importance of cattle, which are used in ritual connected with the death and burial of kings.

These are but a few instances indicating the way in which lines of investigation converge, though they may appear to be distinct. In fact the very division of a monograph into chapters is misleading in its suggestion of distinct divisions of tribal life, whose parts are actually a psychological unity.

When accompanying boys and men during their food-collecting and hunting expeditions a wealth of nature lore and a richness of vocabulary were discovered, and a vocabulary of one hundred and thirty words comprising names of birds, reptiles, mammals, and plants was prepared. Species are carefully distinguished, to such a degree that discussions respecting the correct native names for similar species tend to be prolonged and humorous.

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When I realized the closeness with which the native observes the habits of animals, there was no difficulty in understanding why folklore stories of animals are so popular and so amusing in their descriptions of animal behavior. In addition to its associations with nature study, folklore reveals standards of conduct and processes of rationalization.

In collecting names of birds and their cries, and while recording hunting customs, I was informed of the bird Onjimbi which flies at night to give the sound of death to those who will not see the morning. Then there is a nocturnal bird called Esuvi which is able to catch spirits of the dead who are active at night. A spirit so caught dies a second death, but what this means I could not immediately discover. Later a man said he was sick because Esuvi had caught the spirit of his grandfather. This implies the belief that an ancestral spirit is a guardian whose function ends when a second death is experienced.

Study of natural history sometimes leads to a point of importance in social procedure. There is a bird Onduva whose feathers are used for decorating the head of a dead king and for embellishing the person of a medicine-man; the feathers may not be used in any other

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way. Such instances as these came to light when my primary intention was a study of the use of wooden arrows for killing birds.

An inquiry about the names of trees and the use of timbers led to the topic of making and using wooden figures for magical purposes. Woodcraft, wood-carving, and religion are associated.

There is no fallacy so great as that of supposing that data may be collected and retained in mutually exclusive divisions. For example, a study of proverbs leads to native ideas concerning government, succession to office, and standards of conduct. The Ovimbundu say, "A turtle cannot climb on a tree stump, some one has to place it there." What is the meaning of this proverb? There are some men who occupy positions for which they have no ability; such men have been chosen through influence. The normal successor to chieftainship and kingship is the eldest son of the deceased man's principal wife, but if this rightful successor is stupid, some other son will be chosen. Yet the foolish youth may have friends who see their own advantage in having a weak ruler; they therefore combine to place him in office. The turtle has been placed on the tree stump, since it could not climb there.

In addition, folklore shows projection of the mentality of human beings into the lives of animals. Bird cries, with their supposed calls and answers, indicate that the birds have their family relationships involving strife, love, jealousy, and generosity. To the Ovimbundu, birds are a feathered human community.

Proverbs reveal a philosophy which is expressed by the German *Weltanschauung*. "If you are full of food, do not climb on a leopard's back; the leopard may be hungry." This means that one should not be foolishly exalted through good fortune. "You cannot tie a buck's head in a cloth; the horns will stick out," expresses the idea that crime cannot be concealed. "Hot water does not burn a house, and cold water does not make mush," is a sarcastic reply to one who boasts of things he cannot do. A riddle may express a philosophical train of thought. "What is it that lives while it dies and dies while it lives?" This is the log of wood the end of which is from time to time pushed farther into the fire. Like a human life, the log is being slowly consumed while yet living. Such examples as these call attention to a welding of thought, language, nature lore, and ideas that regulate conduct.

In considering food supply and occupations, division of labor on a sex basis is clear. Social sanctions have determined the appro-

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I cannot find in the life of the Ovimbundu anything to support the opinion of W. C. Willoughby. This writer sees in the soul of every race an instinct for god that tells upon behavior, an upward urge that makes for betterment, due to the unwearied play of the spirit of god on the souls of man. The views of E. Torday and R. J. van Wing (Dualism in Western Bantu Religion and Social Organization, *J.R.A.I.*, XLVIII, p. 225) seem to be more applicable to the spiritual beliefs of the Ovimbundu.

The Ovimbundu have standards of conduct, codes of laws, crimes, and punishments. In addition to the *ekandu* (antisocial acts) already noted, *ohembi* is a liar, *okusapa* means to be greedy, and such actions are deprecated; but there is no deistic injunction toward the virtues of truthfulness, hospitality, and fair dealing.

Standards of conduct and social values are preserved by the educational forces previously mentioned (chapter VII), and in addition to these there are such controls as trial by ordeal, and divination to detect guilt. The satirical song is also a form of correction, though its application may be antisocial, for instance in taunting the sexually impotent.

Music and dancing are adjuncts for the preservation of social customs and the stimulation of collective emotions on which cooperation depends. Music and dancing are also aids to magical practices. For example, a friction drum is played while a medicine-man carries out his divination with the basket, and vigorous drumming takes place during treatment of the sick. Music and dancing were again seen to be of importance at a funeral ceremony.

These instances, which are chosen from many of like kind reported in the foregoing chapters, serve to indicate an interrelationship among the main aspects of tribal life. I have endeavored to choose from personal experience those facts and incidents which illustrate the mutual dependence of language, folklore, proverbs, nature lore, food supply, and occupations.

The sexual division of labor, the connection of ceremonial with occupation, the relationship of the sexes, and the position of woman, have all been brought forward as examples of social controls.

The persistence of belief and custom despite foreign influences; the nature of government, including the psychology of prestige and leadership; spiritual beliefs; the training of children; and the value of music and dancing, have likewise been emphasized as coordinating

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principles among the religious, social, and economic aspects of tribal life.

In searching for some monism which integrates tribal thought and conduct, I would emphasize the relationship between the sacred and profane. The former is derived from the latter by ritual acts which are frequently, but not exclusively, connected with the medicine-man and spirits of the dead. These departed spirits do not sever their connection with the living. On the contrary, they are concerned with the affairs of men, which they handle benevolently or malevolently according to caprice.

Attention has been called to the importance of fire when ceremonially kindled and distributed; this is but a single instance of the sacred use of an everyday commodity. A woman's belt is an ordinary item of clothing, but it may be something more important. A woman who is the mother of girls only, exchanges belts with the mother of boys only, and in future the mother of female children will give birth to boys, and conversely. This is the simplest instance of transfer from a secular to a magical use without resort to an intermediary person such as the medicine-man.

Bows, mats, and staffs are articles of everyday use until their owners are dead and the articles are deposited in the house of bows. Such a house is then sacred, because the ancestral spirits can be induced to enter it to grant favors after sacrifice has been made. Cowrie shells were normally a medium of exchange, but they may become a charm in order to induce conception. A snake's backbone acquires power when threaded by the medicine-man and placed round the neck of a patient who suffers from rheumatism. A cooking pot of clay is entirely secular until it becomes the property of a hunter, after which no other person may use it. A piece of an ant hill is merely earth. But if the belated traveler takes such a piece from the top of the hill and places it in the fork of a branch there will be an extension of daylight. A ritual element enters in the spell, "O sun, wait for me a little while."

The unifying and binding effect of magical rites, simple or complex, private and public, is the warp of the fabric by which the weft threads of the social pattern are bound together. To vary the metaphor, tribal life is a sphere of action, a universe having principal units around which others revolve. Each unit of the structure has a course and movements peculiar to itself, but there is no actual isolation from the influences of other bodies.

ing become thin; but avoidance of milk is really one of those deeply rooted food prejudices which even the people themselves could not explain if willing to do so. 234

The Vakuanyama of south Angola make butter by swinging two large calabashes on a pole, but though this practice is known to the Ovimbundu, they do not imitate the method. The flesh of cattle that have died from disease or accident is eaten, and uses are found for the hide, tail, and horns. But cattle are not slaughtered except at a funeral feast, after which the horns are mounted on a pole over the grave, and perhaps the skulls are preserved near the site of burial. 231

Cattle serve as fines, sacrifices, and gifts, including a bride's dowry, but the social and religious importance is greater than the economic use. This is in accordance with what might be expected, since the pastoral activities of the Ovimbundu are but an adopted series of traits which can be found among numerous pastoral tribes of southwest, south, and east Africa. Wrapping the head of a king in oxhide which is ceremonially renewed has been mentioned. In addition to this rite, the use of oxhide bracelets by mourners, and the use of an oxhide shroud for chiefs and kings, must be recorded. Use of ceremonial fire which is distributed from the chief's house when a new village is founded, and creation of new fire after epidemic sickness, are Umbundu traits which form part of the typical pastoral culture elsewhere.

Consideration of food supply has indicated the preservation of ritual and belief, not intensively, but with sufficient force to show great tenacity of indigenous culture in the face of prolonged and disturbing intrusions. 182 ●

HANDICRAFTS

Incomparably important is the craft of the blacksmith. The preservation of ritual and belief was at once suggested by the workers' refusal to sell me any of the tools, especially the large hammer (onjundo), although the sum offered covered the value of the implements and the time lost in making new ones. After three months I acquired a large hammer from the wife of a blacksmith who had not worked at his trade for many years. She parted with the tool in the absence of her husband, but demanded a sum which would have purchased an ox. Other tools were made for me. 326

Information respecting the blacksmiths' ritual was given in the village of Njongolo in Elende, but I am informed that the beliefs are general, and they are certainly compatible with all that is known of blacksmiths' ritual among Bantu Negroes, Sudanic Negroes, and Hamiticized Negroes of east Africa. I found no mining of iron but saw a site where the ore was for-

1/2 [Cf. p. 160, cat. 116. -- Analyst]

INTRODUCTION

Bailundo.¹² On the kinship system, however, I was even more disappointed. The information which I was given on the matrilineal groups formerly existing was much less than that provided by Hastings,¹⁴ or by Childs,¹⁵ and I have therefore not been able to obtain the detail for which I had hoped on the double-descent system. (121)

Like all anthropologists I had a certain number of difficulties (121) in making contact with the people, and to these were added the problems of finding underlying consistencies in a changing (123) society. The Ovimbundu are not interested in genealogies and did not see why I was. My first attempts to take village censuses were regarded with great suspicion, and more than once people refused to give their names. Kinship terms and norms seemed (122) to be and were very confused. Various matters, such as surviving pagan rituals, were concealed from me. My personal relations with the people were very happy, however, and almost everybody who came to know me was prepared to answer my questions at length.

My two great problems in the field were to obtain information (121) on the old social structure (which I already knew in outline (122) from the written material), and to see how the present-day society worked. The material in this thesis will be laid out in the following way. The first part will give an outline of Umbundu social structure as it was in the period 1874-1911,¹⁶ that is, the era of the rubber trade. The second part will give a series of chapters on present day Umbundu society, which will provide the information necessary for an understanding of the mechanisms of social control. In the third part a detailed discussion of social control is made, beginning with an examination of a number of disputes. It is shown how the network of kinship and marriage ties in a neighbourhood provide local continuity and stability, while the wider units in which the Ovimbundu now participate are of European origin and control.

¹² Camongue and Oela were tributary to Bailundo but were not incorporated (123) into the actual kingdom (Childs, p. 168). Camongue people say that they are not Va-Mbailundu.

¹⁴ Hastings, Chapter VI.

¹⁵ Hastings gives more information than Childs on the matrilineal kin group.

¹⁶ The period of the rubber trade. Childs, pp. 202-15.

[1874-1911]

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439 journeys diminished in distance as they increased in profit-
484 ability.⁵³

My informants, however, gave a somewhat different picture. Long trading journeys were still being undertaken in the last decade of the trade (1901-11). Some men whom I met had travelled to the kingdom of the Mwata Yamvo and beyond to Luba country; one man had made a journey into what is now the Congo Republic which took a year to go and a year to return; another had visited Barotseland. It should be said that these seem to have been unusually long journeys; journeys totalling six to eight months were common.⁵⁴

182 The significance of the trade in social life is reflected in the
829 mystical explanations of success in business found in Umbundu
678 religion. Prosperity might be explained either by the favour of
[258] spirits such as Kandundu and Otjipukú, who received at their
shrines libations of wine, or by malevolent sorcery involving the
sacrifice of relatives in exchange for wealth.⁵⁵ The existence of
these two explanations probably reflects the existence of some
rich men who satisfied the expectations of their relatives and
others who did not.

567 Apart from the rubber trade, the older slave trade continued
128 until its vigorous suppression in the period 1910-12, and indeed
seems, as regards the Ovimbundu, to have become intensi-
fied in the period after 1890. The slaves went to S. Tome and
Principe, or to coastal plantations. Up to that time the Ovi-
bundu had sold few of their own people, with the exception
of criminals or people who had become generally unpopular
with their kin. The collapse of the old political system played
into the hands of adventurers who unscrupulously exploited the
Umbundu custom of debt slavery or conducted raids for this
purpose.⁵⁶

404 It was then the 'trade' which was the common factor in the
439 life of all Ovimbundu, and which was so to speak the factor,

⁵³ Childs, p. 208.

⁵⁴ Informants.

⁵⁵ Although some old men still have shrines to the luck-giving spirits it is not possible to see how their cult functioned in the social structure then existing. It is, however, notable that success could be interpreted mystically in two ways by benevolent spirits or by sorcery.

⁵⁶ Childs, p. 213. I was told that Gumba had been raided from Bailundo.

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764 funerals (though these burials could be undertaken by the cross-cousins of the deceased). When *sakwatjisoko* came to their partner-chiefdom for a funeral they had the right to steal small live-stock, such as chickens, or pigeons, but not cattle, goats, or pigs. An *sakwatjisoko* could sleep with the wives of his *sakwatiji-*soko partners without being sued for damages.⁶⁶

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[602] The ties of kinship and affinity crossed the boundaries of the sub-chiefdoms and even of the kingdoms.⁶⁷ The members of the three spirit-protected professions, blacksmithing, divining, and hunting recognized obligations of hospitality to co-professionals from other parts of the country.⁶⁸ Again the caravans were so large that they must have involved people from many sub-chiefdoms, which presupposes a wide range of contacts.

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● 162 It may be said that the picture given here is contradictory and inadequate. How can the existence of large kingdoms be reconciled to the extreme insecurity described by old men? How do the wealthy caravan organizers fit into the political system? What sort of politics were there in the kingdoms? It is not easy to answer these questions owing to the lack of evidence, and, probably, because the kingdoms were already in decline during the latter part of the rubber trade period. Indeed, the impression that accounts of the Ovimbundu in the nineteenth century give is that of adventure, battle, commerce, migration—a vigorous rather than a stable society.⁶⁹

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114 The kinship system is perhaps the field of Umbundu society which has aroused most interest among anthropologists. Childs and Hastings have written much that is interesting on the old double-descent grouping but as, with the kinship system, the form has been described rather than the functioning and it is

⁶⁶ Informants. The account in Childs, pp. 114-15 differs considerably. For this institution elsewhere in Angola see Estermann, 'Clans et alliances de clans', *Anthropos*, 1953.

⁶⁷ Childs, p. 54.

⁶⁸ Informants.

⁶⁹ Magyar describes the king and his courtiers as being extremely despotic towards the villagers, and states that their despotism depended on their having a standing military force called 'Sons of the Elephant' (pp. 278-80). Later accounts do not mention this, and Childs notes (p. 209) that at the height of the rubber trade it was more difficult for the kings to recruit armies for their wars.

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613 could be resolved in the matrilineal group.⁷⁸ Hastings, who gives the most detailed account of the matrilineal groups, which he calls sibs, tells us, 'There can be no exaction of fines or taking of slaves between the members of a sib group—the group members are supposed to pay each other's debts, and one who has wealth and refuses so to communicate may be secretly poisoned by the others. It is within the group of matrilineal sibs that most compacts, whether social or economic, are formed and operate. The same is true even of malevolent plots and anti-social practices, such as killing by witchcraft.'⁷⁹

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437 Clearly, the matrilineal groups in which the rich had to pool their wealth with poorer kinsfolk and in which trading arrangements⁸⁰ were made indicate the adaptation of the kinship system to the needs of the trade. It may be suggested that one of the functions of the double descent system was to separate the fields of village and chiefdom relations, established through patrilineal ties, from the field of commerce, credit, and the inheritance of wealth gained by trade. Thus the conflicts in which a man would be involved in one set of relations would not involve his other set of ties, and this distribution of stresses must have limited the strains set up by disputes. The distinction between the local group and the commercial group would also prevent heavy losses from trade striking a whole village simultaneously.⁸¹ The credit institutions demanded by a trading system in which debt was frequently incurred were fitted into the kinship system, and associated with a device for levelling those who had become prosperous in the trade.

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[170] Unhappily the disintegration of the traditional social structure, and the accompanying loss of knowledge of it, prevented me from adding to, or even corroborating entirely, the written material on the form of the matrilineal groups.⁸² It is not at all evident how the groups maintained integration, or how new

⁷⁸ Hambly, p. 200.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 92.

⁸⁰ Dr. Childs suggested to me that the core of the caravans might be composed of kin. However, the caravans were so large that they clearly could not be organized on a kinship basis. See also Serpa Pinto, p. 163.

⁸¹ This point was suggested to me by Dr. Mary Douglas.

⁸² I did not obtain any information on the size of the matrilineal group, the existence of heads of the groups, and the degree to which it was a congregation.

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593 It was then the father who normally exercised authority over
 591 a boy, and on the father's death a child or youth would join the
 604 household of a father's brother. Yet the right of a sister's son to
 the inheritance of the movable property and to grants from his
 mother's brother was counterbalanced by the latter's right
 to sell his uterine nephew into slavery, a fate from which the
 father could save his son by ransoming him, in which case the
 mother's brother would no longer have this right.⁸⁶ In this
 society, the mother's brother—sister's son relationship was fund-
 amentally an economic one, in which the sister's son received
 assistance in the trade and inherited his uncle's gains in
 this trade, but could himself be transformed into a source of
 capital.

182 I now summarize the evidence on Umbundu social control
 and its relation with the trading economy. It is clear that the
 Ovimbundu belonged to the number of those African societies
 [184] with pyramidal⁸⁷ political systems and formal codes and courts
 of law, even though there exists uncertainty as to the relative
 power of the kingdoms and the sub-chiefdoms. Social control
 182 also operated through the kinship system, authority at the
 613 village level being in the hands of the head of the patrilineal
 group backed by the public opinion expressed in the men's
 house, and the dispersed matrilineal groups having sanctions
 in the right of sale of a sister's son and in the accusations of
 sorcery brought against those who failed to use wealth to aid
 their relatives. For the caravan trade to have attained the
 182 importance it did there must also have existed something of a
 631 *pax Umbunduca* stimulated by the existence of such ties as that
 between *ijisoko* partners and the 'international' hospitality
 shown to diviners, hunters, and smiths. Evidence of this *pax*
Umbunduca is provided by the organization of caravans, and
 by the establishment of marriage ties between persons in
 different kingdoms, and between different royal houses.⁸⁸
 [721] However, warfare was not unknown between the different

⁸⁶ Childs, p. 44, and my informants.

⁸⁷ See Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, *Introduction to African Political Systems*.

⁸⁸ Hastings (p. 1) notes a marriage between the daughter of a king of Die and Ekwikwi, king of Bailundo (1876-93). Childs (p. 171) notes that Kakulukusu, king of Nôulu, was a sister's son of a king of Bailundo.

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kingdoms of the Ovimbundu, though more frequently perhaps it was made against the non-Umbundu peoples.⁸⁸

The question of the influence of the trade provides interesting opportunities for comparison. The Ovimbundu were the southernmost of the peoples who in the nineteenth century participated in the trade between the Europeans of the West African coast and the peoples of the interior.⁸⁹ In some ways the Ovimbundu seem to have been less influenced by it than were some of the peoples further north. The Ovimbundu did not develop genuine patterns of urban life as in Dahomey or Benin.⁹⁰

Three explanations can be offered for the relative failure of associational groups and urban society to develop. Umbundu crafts were much inferior to those found along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea; there was no indigenous weaving industry, for instance, and the goods which the caravans carried to the interior were all of European or American origin, cloths, guns, and rum.⁹¹ For these goods the Ovimbundu were dependent on the Portuguese settled at the coast or in the Highland and this meant that the Ovimbundu were far from economic autonomy. Again the trade had a relatively short time span—the real boom period lasted only from 1886 to 1900, and earlier on in the 1840's when the beeswax, ivory, and slave trade was flourishing, the Ovimbundu had plenty of time for warfare.

It would, however, be a grave mistake to think that trade had only a marginal influence on Umbundu society. It has been suggested that the form of the double-descent system owes its origin to the necessity to isolate economic relations from other social fields. In the sphere of ritual, there are some remarkable copies of European practices—for instance the holding of a feast in honour of the ancestors at Christmas-time.⁹² Many ritual concepts are related to the explanation of business

⁸⁸ For information on Umbundu warfare see Magyar, pp. 277-80 and Serpa Pinto, pp. 177-9.

⁸⁹ See Balandier, *Sociologie Actuelle de l'Afrique Noire*, Paris, 1955, for a discussion of social change in other areas which had experienced a trade of a similar sort.

⁹⁰ For Dahomey see M. J. Herskovits, *Dahomey*, New York, 1938. For Benin see R. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom* (Ethnographic Survey of Africa), London, 1957.

⁹¹ Childs, p. 206.

⁹² Informants.

[1874-1911]

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182 success. More generally, it may be suggested that the conditions of the trade in which wealth was dependent on contact with Europeans created not only the Umbundu esteem for 'shrewd behaviour' (*oku lungata*) and their willingness for social change, but their marked docility and submissiveness towards Europeans.²⁴

²⁴ See O. Maanoni, *Progres and Caliban*, London, 1956, for an ingenious discussion of a similar set of attitudes.

439 *Axe and hoe blades, blankets, cloths, clothing, cutlery,*
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438 drinking-mugs, lanterns, metal plates, pens, pencils, wine, and writing slates are bought from the traders. Axe and hoe handles, buckets, bedsteads, beer, bows and arrows, chairs, fish-traps, mats, mush sticks, pottery, pounding-blocks, stools, tables, and small metal objects such as knives are made by Ovimbundu and may be sold locally. To this local trade may be added the selling of pieces of meat by anyone who has killed a pig, or gone hunting and killed a duiker. Very occasionally somebody who has bought cloths in a town or has some hand-made object superior to the local average may tour villages selling his goods as a pedlar.

439 The only trade which at all recalls the days of the caravan trade is the cattle trade with the Kwanyama Ambo. As in the rubber trade the Ovimbundu make use of their intermediary geographical position. They obtain from Luanda shells called *olomands* (singular *omande*). One of these shells costs 10 escudos (2s. 6d.) at Luanda and ten of them will buy a beast in Kwanyama country. Alternatively 30 rounds of tobacco will buy a beast there. I knew several men who had made, or planned to make, trips of this nature. The analogy with the caravan trade breaks down, however, when the relative importance of the two is examined. The caravan trade determined the economic standards of the Ovimbundu, absorbed a great part of the time of every able-bodied man and youth, and influenced every aspect of Umbundu life from the foreign policy of the kings to accusations of sorcery; the cattle-keeping is relatively unimportant economically since the Ovimbundu do not drink [262] milk, and eat meat, even chicken or pork, very irregularly, nor does the occasional sale of cattle to traders altogether balance their uncertain survival away from their indigenous grasses. The real importance of cattle in the economy seems to be as a [257] form of capital investment for spare savings, an investment which can be liquidated either by sacrifice on ceremonial occasions or back into money by sale. Socially, it may be thought of as marking the survival of the Umbundu capacity and enthusiasm for trading in an age when the economic situation has closed the old routes. Indeed, perhaps the sub-conscious motive for the Ovimbundu who trade is to show that they can act outside of that economic framework of cultivation

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and wage labour which I have described as affecting the Ovimbundu as a whole. 433
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It is not easy to compose budgets of household expenditure and income, partly because they have not yet much of a 'book-keeping' outlook, and partly because they suspect the motives behind questions of this sort. My own opinion is that from agriculture the average household would earn considerably less than 1,000 escudos (£12. 10s.) a year. The Banco de Angola in its Report for 1955⁴ gives a budget for an African family at Silva Porto, consisting of father, mother, and two young children, having agriculture as their only source of income. Their total yearly income is given as 7,750 escudos (about £96. 17s. 6d.). Even allowing for the higher prices paid for crops on the railway line, an income of this order is far above anything earned by the average cultivating household, though it might be earned by the few men who cultivated coffee extensively and lived in Portuguese style. 434
(124)

Some details of the economic life of individuals may give 511 depth to this chapter. Kambungo, a kinsman of Sapapula living in Menga, was a man of over sixty who had in his youth travelled on the caravans. He had a large house but lived in a village amongst kinsfolk. In June 1955 he had been in Kwanyama country where, with shells obtained at Luanda, he had bought cattle and for 15 of the *olomande* shells he got a sewing-machine. In the year 1955-6 (very roughly from the end of the dry season in '55 to the same period in '56) he had sold ten sacks of maize at 25 escudos each and six sacks of beans for 60 escudos each. He had, however, concluded that maize did not pay and had started to grow coffee. He had sold one beast for 900 escudos (£10. 15. 0), and had also sold ten sheep for 100 escudos (£1. 5. 0) each. He had also sold a coat for 120 escudos (£1. 10. 0).

The principal item of Kambungo's expenditure was a bicycle which he bought for 1,500 escudos (£18. 15s.). He had also bought two beds each 100 escudos, and ten plates 100 escudos altogether. He had bought ten bottles of wine, at 5 escudos each, and had also bought some indigenous rum, price not noted. Ten traditional sleeping mats cost 2½ escudos each, and four

⁴ Quoted by Egerton, pp. 124-5.

181 Making money and being rich are regarded with
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unambiguous approval, though there is a certain undertone suggesting cunning in the verb *oku lunguka* (to be shrewd) used about prosperous people. The old suspicion of sorcery attaching to people who were more successful farmers than their neighbours⁶ seems to have disappeared. While a prosperous villager would be expected to lend money to a poorer kinsman (provided the latter was not known as a bad debtor) yet, the situation which occurs in other parts of Africa, where, as Dr. V. W. Turner notes of the Mwinilunga Ndembu, prosperous Africans 'find themselves increasingly embarrassed by the demands of their kin for presents in cash and kind', would not arise among the Ovimbundu, who would regard such demands as being unjustified, even outrageous.

511 Wealthy Ovimbundu may spend some of their wealth on clothing and on drink. Cattle-buying has been noted as a form [457] of capital investment and the same term may be used of small stock buying. Another way of disposing of money is by building a house of bricks with the assistance of a bricklayer. A plough may be, but rarely is, bought by two men joining together to pool their money. Generally speaking, the agricultural technology of the Ovimbundu has been little changed since 1911 except for the spread of the techniques of coffee-growing.

648 It has been noted earlier that the Ovimbundu play an important part in the economic life of Angola both as cultivators and labourers. In this chapter an attempt has been made to show how at the local level it is the cultivation of cash crops, rather than migration for wage labour, which incorporates villagers into the commercial economy of modern Angola. The main source of money in rural areas is the trader's store, which is also the main recipient of money, apart from the administration. While trade both between Ovimbundu and between Ovimbundu and other tribes survives on a minor scale, 178 the social institutions associated with the rubber trade, the 182 large caravans, the non-repayable loans within the matrilineal group, and the obligations of wealthy traders to assist their kin, have disappeared. The contemporary social structure with the

⁶ Childs, pp. 106-8.

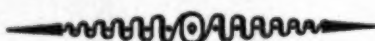
⁷ V. W. Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

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instability of village sites and village populations, the marked ¹⁷⁸ emergence of the elementary family, and the non-existence of ¹⁸² economic activities and rights associated with corporate groups, is consistent with the growth of cash crops by shifting cultivation.

CHAPTER VIII

MARRIAGE



1. *The Significance of Preferential Marriage*

Informants say that it is permissible to marry a classificatory cross-cousin, are divided as to the permissibility of marriage with a classificatory sister's daughter, and generally disapprove of marriage with other kin categories, or with true kin of these two categories. Indeed, kinsfolk who marry seem usually not to have any traceable common ancestor.¹ Up to recently,² a man marrying a kinswoman had to pay an indemnification of, say, 20 escudos to 'cut the blood'. This changed the kin relationship into an affinal one.

It has been previously stated that preferential marriages have an important social role to play in keeping kinsfolk together and multiplying the ties of kinship and affinity. If this is to be proved, it is necessary to show what the people themselves think of preferential marriages, what proportion of the marriages are between kinsfolk, whether this proportion has decreased under modern conditions, and how it relates to the contemporary kinship system.

Several reasons may be given for choosing a cross-cousin bride. The bridewealth is likely to be lower, the girl is more likely to stay and not run away, if one cannot find another girl there will always be a cross-cousin to marry, and, old men point out, one will not be fined if a cross-cousin bride dies.

¹ This statement does not depend simply on my own information. Padre Felten, superior of the Bimbe mission, who knew of the existence of these marriages told me that very few Umbundu marriages were between kin within the degrees of kinship prohibited (a prohibition removable by a dispensation) by the Catholic Church. Marriage with a first cousin is not infrequent both in Portugal itself and among the white Portuguese in Angola.

² About 1949.

CONCLUSIONS

gaining of wealth by means involving extensive economic co-¹⁰⁵
operation among the Ovimbundu themselves, money was ¹⁷⁸
earned in an individual relation to a particular European
whether planter or trader.

It must be recognized that the relation between economic
change and the continuation or disintegration of kinship groups ^[121]
is a yet unsolved problem of anthropology,⁶ particularly as it is
seldom possible to isolate the economic pressure. I emphasize
the readiness of the Ovimbundu for change, their willing
acceptance of the role of clients to the whites.⁷ It may be
suggested that this attitude was established in the period of the
trade when the Ovimbundu were ultimately dependent on the
whites for trade goods and that this attitude of imitation and
receptivity lies behind the disappearance of so much of the old
social structure and the lack of any myth of, or even interest in,
the past.⁸

I have claimed that the present system of social control is ¹⁰⁵
effective.⁹ This may be granted empirically for the reasons ¹⁸²
already given, the absence of serious crime or prolonged
conflict involving the whole community, the effective checks on
the functionaries of the post, and the failure of squabbles to
tear the network of kin and affinal ties. If a working social
system is a proof of an integrated society, then contemporary
Umbundu society qualifies for this description. This is not the
only possible way of looking at it. It may be claimed that under
present circumstances the Ovimbundu are no longer integrated
by their tribal system but are held together by the Angolan¹⁰

⁶ For various comments on this problem see A. I. Richards, in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, p. 231, M. Fortes, 'Structure of Unilineal Descent Groups', in *American Anthropologist*, Feb. 1953, M. Douglas (review of Mitchell's *The Yao Village*) in *Africa*, July 1957.

⁷ Cf. the Ngangela name for the Ovimbundu, the Ovimbali, a term traditionally applied to Africans living in close contact with the whites. The Ovimbundu accept this stereotype.

⁸ 'A lack of history is correlated with the amorphous character of the society.' E. Colson in Colson and Gluckman (ed.) *Seven Tribes of British Central Africa*, Oxford, 1951, p. 100.

⁹ Other quarrels of which I heard while in Epalanga: a messenger from the mission sent to intervene in a marriage dispute was attacked; the chief of Chicunda summoned to the mission for a telling-off after beating up one of his people; a man from Gumba refusing to go to a funeral in Cassongue of a man whose death he was thought to have caused by sorcery.

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182 ● Government,¹⁰ which has deprived them of all legal and political autonomy. The present Umbundu social system deprived of any form of public life ticks over, as a man who has been paralysed may continue to live. The cultural barriers and structural gulf between the post, the basic unit of the administration, and the people, are to a certain extent bridged by the mission. This task throws a considerable strain on the organizations set up by the missions, to which they are far from equal.¹¹ The common values shared by 'civilized' and native, whose introduction was ascribed to the missions, give the Ovimbundu psychological compensation rather than a genuine participation in the culture of the ruling group. The stability which marks social relations in the area is passivity rather than integration.

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182 The most truthful approach would seem to be a synthesis of the two arguments. The disintegration of the old legal and political institutions and the attitude of dependence and passivity towards Europeans cohere with a stability provided by the pattern of kin and affinal ties and the continuity of local relations. It has been argued that the range of marriages (and hence the range of kinship ties) has not noticeably expanded in recent years, and that the links which orient Gumba to the north and west rather than to the south and east date back to the nineteenth century. Such other factors as the poor local communications, the limited economic development of the area, and the absence of resident whites in Gumba may also have helped to preserve the continuity and security of the 'private' life of individuals.¹² In other areas of Umbundu country, especially near the railway line, where communications are easy, Europeans and *assimilados* are numerous, and there are more marked differences of wealth, this 'coherence' of change and continuity may have very much less empirical efficiency.

In one part of Umbundu country in 1955, a contra-accultura-

¹⁰ Putting it another way; there is no Umbundu political system, and hence the nearest approach to Umbundu politics are the squabbles of Chapter IX.

¹¹ The missionaries complain of the poor calibre of many catechists, and the catechists complain of the lack of obedience of their people.

¹² The relations between two individuals may remain friendly, even though the form of their relations changes.